



# Department of Justice

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## **ESCAPEE SENTENCED FOR DRUG CRIMES**

COLUMBUS – Billy Jack Fitzmorris, age 35, formerly of Columbus was sentenced in United States District Court here today to 30 years imprisonment for drug trafficking conspiracy and five years for possession of a firearm in furtherance of a drug trafficking crime for a total sentence of 35 years imprisonment.

Gregory G. Lockhart, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Christopher Sadowski, Special Agent in Charge, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Director Terry Collins, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections; Franklin County Sheriff Jim Karnes; Columbus Police Chief James G. Jackson, and Franklin County Prosecuting Attorney Ron O'Brien, announced the sentence handed down today by United States District Judge Gregory L. Frost.

Fitzmorris was indicted July 6, 2006 and arrested the day after his indictment. He pleaded guilty on January 29, 2007. Fitzmorris was distributing crack and powder cocaine at a house on Todd Avenue in Columbus when police executed a search warrant in April, 2005. Officers found a white plastic bag containing 779 grams of cocaine powder, 13 grams of crack cocaine, and a 9mm pistol. Officers also seized approximately nine pounds of marijuana.

Fitzmorris escaped from a prison in Youngstown on April 2, 2007 while awaiting sentencing on the drug charges. He was indicted for two counts of armed bank robbery, two counts of using a firearm in a crime of violence, one count of being a felon in possession of a firearm, and one count of hostage taking in connection with events that occurred on the day of his escape. Fitzmorris is scheduled for trial on those charges on September 11, 2008.

Lockhart commended the efforts of the ATF agents, Adult Parole Authority officers, sheriff's deputies and police detectives for their cooperative investigation in this case, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Kevin Kelley, who prosecuted the case.

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